



REPORT

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Meeting Date: November 3, 2020
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Updating the focus of the Greenest City Fund Program and Renewing Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grant Relationship with Vancouver Foundation for 2021 to 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT Council approve updates to the ongoing Greenest City Fund program (which includes the Greenest City Grant stream and the Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants stream) to reflect (i) the priorities under the Climate Emergency Action Plan, and (ii) a focus on equity.
- B. THAT Council authorize City staff to enter into an agreement with the Vancouver Foundation to enable the Vancouver Foundation to continue to carry out the ongoing Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants stream of the Greenest City Fund program for another 5 years from 2021 – 2025.
- C. THAT upon a legal agreement between the Vancouver Foundation and the City for the purpose of enabling Recommendation B being settled to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability and the Director of Legal Services, that they be authorized to enter into such legal agreement on behalf of the City.

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to (1) update the focus of the Greenest City Fund program (which includes the Greenest City Grant and the Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants streams) to reflect (i) the priorities under the Climate Emergency Action Plan, and (ii) a focus on equity, and (2) to enter into an agreement with the Vancouver Foundation to enable the Vancouver Foundation to continue to carry

out the ongoing Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants stream of the Greenest City Fund program for another 5 years from 2021 – 2025 to support citizens and community organizations to implement sustainability projects with an emphasis on climate action and equity.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

The Greenest City Action Plan (GCAP) was adopted by Council in July 2011, which included a priority action to establish a Greenest City Fund program to support residents and non-profit organizations in advancing the goals of GCAP.

On April 17, 2012, Council approved a four-year partnership with the Vancouver Foundation to administer and co-fund the Greenest City Fund.

On November 3, 2015, Council approved the second phase of the Greenest City Action Plan, which included as a priority action continuing and expanding the Greenest City Fund.

On November 16, 2016, Council approved a new four-year Greenest City Fund Framework: (1) the Greenest City Grants stream for non-profit organizations and registered charities which would be administered by City staff, and (2) the Greenest City-Neighbourhood Small Grants stream for residents which would be administered by the Vancouver Foundation.

On April 29, 2019, Council approved the Climate Emergency Response and associated targets and directed staff to develop strategies to achieve six Big Moves and report back to Council by fall 2020.

On March 14, 2019, Council passed a motion “THAT Council direct staff to review the Greenest City Grants program as it relates to the Greenest City Action Plan, and identify priority areas for funding and potential new and expanded sources of funds.”

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

The Greenest City Action Plan (GCAP) was adopted by Council in July 2011 and included 125 priority actions – one of which was establishing the Greenest City Fund program to enable action within the community to help meet Greenest City targets. The Greenest City Fund was established in 2012 in partnership with the Vancouver Foundation. At that time, Council approved funding of \$250K a year towards the Greenest City Fund.

Greenest City Fund Program – Two Streams:

An updated version of the Greenest City Fund was adopted by Mayor and Council in November, 2016 and was comprised of two grant streams:

1. The *Greenest City Grant* for non-profit organizations and registered charities, administered solely by the City and;
2. The *Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grant* for residents, which the Vancouver Foundation co-funded and administered under an agreement from 2017-2020.

Annual funding of \$250,000 for the Greenest City Fund was approved by Council as part of the 2015 Operating budget. Of this annual budget allocation, \$205,000 is allocated to the Greenest City Grant stream and \$45,000 is allocated to the Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grant stream.

1. Greenest City Grant

The purpose of the Greenest City Grant stream is to support environmental sustainability projects within the City of Vancouver that reduce the community's carbon footprint and enhance the health and resilience of our residents and natural environment. Registered non-profit societies and registered charities are eligible to apply for project grants of up to \$100,000 (typical grant amounts are \$35,000 - \$45,000). The grant is managed by City staff. Five to six projects are typically approved for funding each year.

The Greenest City Grant supports innovative projects that produce tangible outcomes across GCAP goal areas and aims to leverage funding outside of the City. Examples of recent grant projects are:

- From Pedal to Plate: Sustainable Delivery of Rescued Food (Food Stash) – a pilot project delivering rescued food boxes using a cargo electrical assist tricycle delivery model.
- ReCycling Program (Kickstand Community Bikes Society) – a youth-centred project focusing on zero waste by diverting bicycles from the landfill for reuse or recycling.
- Youth for Climate Action (Be the Change Earth Alliance) – a pilot project to empower community centre youth groups and high school green teams to take leadership on climate action projects in their communities.

2. Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants

The Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants stream is a successful co-funding and collaboration effort between the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Foundation. The program builds local leadership capacity in Vancouver neighbourhoods so residents can actively contribute towards sustainability in the City. Residents can apply for a maximum of \$500 per project.

Under the current co-funding and collaboration agreement with the Vancouver Foundation, the City's \$45,000 annual contribution is matched by the Vancouver Foundation. Of the combined \$90,000, \$70,000 is used for direct granting and \$20,000 is used to support the twelve community organizations that administer the grants throughout the city.

Recent examples of Greenest City-Neighbourhood Small Grants include:

- Cedar Cottage, Hastings Sunrise and Frog Hollow: Composting Workshop and Demonstration Site – to support residents in composting at home or at community gardens.
- Downtown Vancouver: Reused and Recycled Fashion Show – an event highlighting the creativity of local residents and demonstrating the value of repurposed and upcycled clothing.
- Central Vancouver: The Herring Net Project – a project to encourage the herring population to return to spawn in the Lower Mainland.

The partnership with the Vancouver Foundation has been a great success in inspiring citizens and organizations to take action with respect to Greenest City goals. This funding model has been replicated by several other municipalities in BC as a result of this success. However, the formal partnership with the Vancouver Foundation ends on December 31, 2020.

Strategic Analysis

Greenest City Fund – Beyond 2020: Focus on Climate Emergency and Equity

The Greenest City Fund has high levels of interest from the community, with demand for grants typically far exceeding the amount of funding available. Project outcomes have been tangible, measurably contributing to Greenest City 2020 targets.

The Greenest City Action Plan expires at the end of 2020. Staff are recommending that the Greenest City Fund continue and that going forward the program have a heightened focus on advancing climate action and equity. Throughout public engagement for the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), we heard loudly the need to foster more collaboration and support community leadership. In addition, systemic inequities mean that residents are impacted by climate change in very different ways. The Fund is an opportunity to actively work to reduce the systemic inequities experienced by residents throughout the city. The Greenest City Fund would generally be used to advance projects in the following areas of climate action:

- Consumption and waste:
- Food systems:
- Active transportation:
- Ecosystem restoration/carbon sequestration
- Energy efficiency & green buildings.

The City's emerging Equity Framework advises staff to apply an Indigenous-centred, race forward, and intersectional approach. Using this approach means that we commit to equity in developing policies, practices and strategic investments that reverse inequitable trends. Through this update to the Greenest City Fund, the City recognizes the need to support groups that are systemically excluded, underserved, and underrepresented on the basis of their intersecting marginalized identities such as Indigenous, Black, other racialized groups, low-income communities, 2SLGBTQ+, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, those experiencing homelessness, among others. The Greenest City Fund provides a tangible way to support both climate action and equity in our community.

Council approval is being sought for the following:

1. Recommendation A - Council approval for updates to the Greenest City Fund program

In order to support implementation of the CEAP, both streams of the Greenest City Fund program should be evolved to advance climate action, equity, and collaborative leadership among City of Vancouver residents and communities (**Recommendation A**).

Updates to the Greenest City Grant Stream:

The updated Greenest City Grant program will offer grants for place-based, community-driven initiatives that help advance sustainability, with greater emphasis on projects that integrate climate action and equity. Through these grants, we hope to foster diverse and multi-generational sustainability leadership and collaboration, create opportunities for innovation, and mobilize community in taking collective action on climate throughout Vancouver, with a specific focus on supporting under-represented and systemically excluded groups.

The following changes to the Greenest City Grant stream are proposed in order to achieve this:

- The addition of equity-focused criteria for both eligible projects and the organizations applying;
- Simplification of the grant application process to lower barriers to entry;
- Reviewing the way we communicate about the grant, in order to make the opportunity more widely known to systemically excluded groups;
- The maximum grant amount will be reduced from \$100,000 to \$50,000 (typical grant amounts to date have been \$35,000 - \$45,000) in order to fund a larger number of projects; and
- Projects may be one to two years in length and the same organization/project/initiative will be funded a maximum of twice per five-year period.

These changes are designed to increase the range of organizations and projects funded, as well as make the process more transparent for applicants. In addition, over the course of the coming year as the equity framework becomes embedded at the City we will be working closely with the Equity Office and Social Policy to assess good practice in granting that will further support an intersectional approach. This will include a thorough

review of all granting processes and an assessment of barriers that might hinder engagement from certain groups.

As is currently the case, specific grant recipient recommendations under the Greenest City Grant stream will be brought forward to Mayor and Council in February of each year for approval, and project results will be presented to Mayor and Council on an annual basis as part of CEAP updates.

Updates to the Greenest City - Neighbourhood Small Grants Stream:

The Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants program will be updated to support and build grassroots action with respect to the CEAP and wider sustainability efforts. In recognition of the added emphasis on equity, the NSGs will also have a new focus on advancing and supporting equity in the field of climate action.

2. Recommendations B and C - Council approval for a 5 year renewal of the co-funding and collaboration relationship with the Vancouver Foundation to continue the Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants stream of the Greenest City Fund

In order to comply with the granting provisions of the *Vancouver Charter*, the City established a co-funding and collaboration relationship with the Vancouver Foundation and, with Council's endorsement (**Recommendations B & C**), the Vancouver Foundation will continue to co-fund and administer the Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grant stream of the Greenest City Fund from 2021 to 2025 (inclusive) as it successfully has from 2012-2020. The grant will be a simple one-step process administered by twelve community organizations across the city with administrative support from the Vancouver Foundation. This approach is consistent with how the grant was successfully administered between 2012 and 2020, during which time it funded over 1,000 projects.

As was the process to date, \$45,000 will be made available from the annual budget allocation to the Greenest City Fund to support the Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grant stream on an annual basis and the Vancouver Foundation has agreed to match that dollar amount on an annual basis as well. Vancouver residents will be eligible to apply for grants of up to \$500. To ensure transparency and accountability as well as to document success, Vancouver Foundation staff will report out on project outcomes to the City each January. The outcomes of the Greenest City Small Neighbourhood Grants will be included in the annual update to Council.

Granting during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created greater operational, financial, and workforce challenges for the environmental non-profit sector and the individuals who use and support environmental programs and services. Greenest City Fund grants are more critical than ever to maintain the strong ecosystem of non-profits, community groups and residents working to achieve our climate and sustainability goals. Given the challenges faced by organizations and residents in planning for projects during the pandemic, grant

applications will be slightly altered during this period to provide opportunities for organizations and individuals to combine sustainability outcomes with projects that support community resilience and pandemic recovery efforts. In addition, applicants will be required to provide details on how they plan to comply with public health orders in their projects, and there will be greater flexibility in terms of project delivery.

Leveraging the Greenest City Fund program

In 2019, Council passed a motion directing staff to explore “potential new and expanded sources of funds” for the Greenest City Grant program. Given the budget challenges the City is currently facing, staff are not recommending the grant amount be increased using City funds. Over the past year, staff have reached out to several local funding organizations about partnering on Greenest City Grants but have not been successful in securing additional external funds. It should be noted, however, that most Grantees in the past have secured external funding in addition to the City’s (not including their in-kind contribution) and we expect that to be the case going forward as well. Staff will continue to engage with external funders and will seek out leveraging opportunities wherever possible. In addition, funds leveraged as a result of the Greenest City Grant will be added to annual reporting criteria.

Implications

Financial

Greenest City Grant Stream: Recommendation A has no financial impact because it is merely seeking Council approval to update the focus of the Greenest City Fund program. The 2021 budget for the Greenest City Fund was approved by Council in 2015 as part of an annual budget allocation of \$250,000. Of this budget allocation, \$205,000 will be allocated to the Greenest City Grant stream (as in years 2012 – 2020). Specific grant recipients will be recommended to Mayor and Council for consideration and approval in February of each year.

Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants Stream: Recommendations B and C also have no financial impact because they are only seeking Council approval to enter into a new agreement with the Vancouver Foundation to enable it to continue to carry out the Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants stream of the Greenest City Fund program. As in past years, staff will report back to Council in February of each year, as part of seeking approval for specific grant recommendations under the Greenest City Fund program, to seek approval for a grant to the Vancouver Foundation for each year of the agreement.

Environmental

Given the creativity and interest within the community in supporting the Climate Emergency Action Plan, there is great potential to positively impact Vancouver’s current and future climate resilience through the updated Greenest City Fund. As well as being a key opportunity for community involvement in the CEAP, the Fund will continue to build

social capital and champions across the city, greatly amplifying the work of staff in this area.

Legal

There are no legal implications to Recommendation A. As for Recommendations B and C, Legal Services will support the negotiation and drafting of, and approve, the legal agreement to be entered into by the Vancouver Foundation and the City to enable the Vancouver Foundation to continue to carry out the Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants stream of the Greenest City Fund program.

CONCLUSION

The Greenest City Fund successfully ran from 2012 to 2020 supporting over 1,100 projects in the City of Vancouver. These grants have become an important source of funding for local non-profits, community groups, and residents seeking to do their part to advance climate action and sustainability.

To achieve our Climate Emergency goals, residents and organizations must be inspired and enabled to make systemic changes that will lower our carbon footprint. In addition, the fund is a key opportunity to actively work to reduce the inequities experienced by residents throughout the city in regards to climate change impacts. An updated Greenest City Fund program that focuses on advancing climate action and equity will provide these opportunities in a way that is transparent, accountable and pragmatic, with direct oversight by City staff. To achieve this, staff are asking Council to approve Recommendation A to update the focus of the Greenest City Fund program and Recommendations B and C to enable the Vancouver Foundation to continue to carry out the Greenest City – Neighbourhood Small Grants stream for another 5 years from 2021 to 2025.

As in past years, staff will report back to Council in February of 2021 with specific grant recommendations for Council's approval under the Greenest City Grant, and report on outcomes from both grant streams as part of CEAP annual reporting.

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